

Focus Group Reports - Annual Meeting of the Members 2003

The purpose of USAWOA focus groups at the Annual Meeting is to determine if the topic studied is an appropriate topic or issues for USAWOA to establish a formal position or take action. If so, to recommend what that position should be and to suggest courses of action to the USAWOA leadership.

Focus Group Number 1 - Combat Device for Aviation Badges. Group Leader: CW4 Bill Petrak

Background: It has been suggested that the aviation qualification badge allow some form of "Combat Device," similar to the wreath that differentiates the Expert Infantryman's Badge (EIB) from the Combat Infantryman's Badge (CIB).

Recommendation: USAWOA Not Support a Combat Device for Aviation Badges.

Justification: May have inadvertent affect to diminish prestige of the Infantry's CIB. Of all soldiers, it is recognized that infantryman continuously operate under the worst conditions and perform a mission which is not assigned to any other soldier or unit. In developing the CIB, the War Department did not dismiss out of hand or ignore the contributions of other branches. Their vital contributions to the overall war effort were noted. However, it was decided that other awards and decorations were sufficient to recognize their contributions. Awarding aviators combat badges could create a situation in which other branches would request combat devices.

Action determined by vote of the members: Recommendation accepted and forwarded to the Board of Directors for implementation.

Focus Group Number 2 - Warrant Officer Insignia. Group Leader: CW4 Candis Martin

Background: One recommendation of the ATLDP is that warrant officers wear branch (proponent) insignia ILO the Rising Eagle WO insignia. The USAWOA is on record in support of the ATLDP "package" of recommendations. At the 2002 AMM, four Focus Groups studied the ATLDP recommendations and did not recommend separate USAWOA action related to the insignia. However, a number of USAWOA members continue ask: "What is the USAWOA position regarding the insignia?" The group will recommend an answer.

Discussion focused on symbolism, heraldry, lineage and WO benefits of ATLDP initiatives. **Consensus** – need to retain the WO Eagle Rising symbol as part of the uniform. Not opposed to the USAWOA current position in support of ATLDP initiatives – transitioning to branch insignia. USAWOA needs to amend or append its position to include retention of Eagle Rising symbol as part of the uniform.

Recommendations:

- USAWOA append/amend their current position of the ATLDP study — Eagle Rising Insignia.
- Continue to support the donning of Branch Insignia.
- USAWOA send a follow up letter to CSA & G-1 regarding the insignia position.
- That newly appointed WO1s wear Eagle Rising until WOBC completion.
- The Rising Eagle Insignia become part of the uniform as an accoutrement and/or special skills badge similar to Drill Sergeants/Recruiters/Guidance Counselors/Pathfinder/Airborne/Air Assault/Aviation/etc.

Justification:

- The Eagle Rising Insignia is an integral part of the Warrant Officer Corps from inception and has vital importance to heraldry, lineage and symbolism. Therefore, it should be retained for wear on the uniform.
- There is benefit to Army – Identification as WO will enhance cohesion & Esprit De Corps across all specialties and as an integral part of each proponent.
- Majority of Warrant Officers feel the need to carry on tradition – something upon which our Military is founded.

Action determined by vote of the members: Recommendation accepted and forwarded to the Board of Directors for implementation.

Focus Group Number 3 - Membership Satisfactory Survey. Group Leader: CW2 Jody Reidenhour

Background:

Successful associations periodically survey members to determine if the association is meeting needs and expectations. USAWOA last did such a survey in 1994. Do we need a membership survey? What is (are) the most effective way(s) to develop and deploy the survey? What are the best/required areas to survey? Should separate populations be surveyed?

Discussion:

- Latitude for national on questions.
- Consider conducting a nonmember survey.
- Courses of Action.
- Conduct a Membership Survey?
- Do not conduct a Membership Survey?
- Do something else?

Recommendation:

- Conduct a Membership Survey each year prior to AMM in DC area.
- Hire firm to put survey into electronics as well as paper product (NEWSLINER, letter, etc.), gather data, & provide results.
- Survey should be no more than 2 pages (one page, front-to-back).

Survey Areas:

- Member Demographics.
- Benefits & Services.
- Annual Membership Meeting.
- Overall Perception.

Justification:

- It's been 10 years!
- Upcoming change of USAWOA leadership (elected and staff).
- 1994 results prompted change (1-800 number, website, changes to membership application).
- Prepare for our future!

(Editor's note: The group provided a number of suggested questions. Due to length, these are not shown in this summary report.)

Action determined by vote of the members: Recommendation accepted and forwarded to the Board of Directors for implementation.

Focus Group Number 4 - USAWOA "Rising Eagle" Award. Group Leader: CW5 (Ret) Butch Zirpolo

Background: This topic came from the Southeastern Region and suggests that USAWOA develop an additional level of award "The Honorable Order of the Eagle Rising"

Discussion:

- Proposed award would not compete with USAWOA WO of Year or President's Award.
- Presented at chapter or region events.
- Provide additional opportunities to recognize deserving individuals.
- Establish a means of recognition by USAWOA for significant contributions to Country, Army, Unit, WO Corps, or Association.

Recommended design: Medallion three inches in diameter, WO emblem on front, WOC, and WO1-CW5 insignia in circle on back, with name engraved in the center. Award box will indicate the chapter involved.

Recommended levels:

Gold – contribution to Div or up, WO Corps Army-wide, WOA regional or national, civic-multiple county.

Silver - contribution at Bn to Bde, WO Corps in area, WOA in region, civic in county or large city.

Bronze - Bde or below, WO at post, WOA Chap, civic in local area.

Recommended Procedures:

Bronze – selection and approval by chapter awards committee, 100-word citation. Send with cost to national. They engrave, identify the chapter in the award box, send to Chapter President.

Silver – Same as chapter procedure, but submits to Regional Director for approval at regional meeting. Once approved, Chapter then sends cost.

Gold – chapter submits 200 word citation through region to National President. On approval, chapter sends costs.

Recommended Approval Levels:

- Gold requires approval at National.
- Silver would require approval by region.
- Bronze may be approved by chapter.

Recommended Methods of Funding and Procurement:

- In all cases, award must be procured from national at cost, (discourage overuse and maintain prestige of the award). (National to maintain a data base of award recipients.)
- A onetime \$10 deduction from every chapter's rebates to procure initial supply (76 x \$10 = \$760). Thereafter, the cost (plus \$15 (\$10 to National, \$5 rebate to chapter)) of each award will fully cover and provide a little extra for National.

Recommendations:

Board of Directors approve current proposal, assigns to a committee for implementation (to include review of AR 670-1) and approval by heraldry by next AMM.

Action determined by vote of the members: Recommendation accepted and forwarded to the Board of Directors for implementation.

Focus Group Number 5 - Degree Completion and Post Graduate Studies for Warrant Officers. Group Leader: CW5 Phil Tackett

Background: This topic emerged from WOLDN traffic suggesting the USAWOA undertake the issue of postgraduate degree-producing schools or degree completion studies for Senior Warrant Officers, which would bring warrant officers on line with the educational opportunities of branch officers. If so, why and what criteria should be met for attendance? If not, why?

Discussion:

- It is necessary to expand the "charter" of the Focus Group.
- Can't get there from here at this point in time.
- Do not compare Warrant Officers to Branch Officers.
- Education programs should be based on the skill sets warrants need in order to accomplish warrant officer duties.
- No "cookie cutter" approach.
- "We want what they want" will fall on deaf ears when briefed to Army Leadership.
- What educational benefits are presently available?
- What role do the proponents play in a degree completion program?
- What does better educational benefits bring to the table?
- What is the return to the Army on the investment?

Recommendations:

- Change the education goal to a requirement.
- Army form a study group to determine what education benefits are presently available to warrant officers.
- Proponents must have a major role in POI Accreditation.

Justification:

- Advanced technology of systems.
- Joint Operations.
- Developing with the future force.
- Career progression to Army level positions.
- Levels the playing field.

Action determined by vote of the members: Recommendation tabled to be evaluated further and brought forth at a future Annual Meeting.